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## SERMON DXCVIII.

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### CHRIST THE MODEL OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.\*

"He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."—*MATT. vii. 29.*

FATHERS AND BRETHREN:—To men like ourselves, engaged in the awful work of religious instruction—publishing and enforcing the lessons of Christianity—it cannot be uninteresting to consider the character of the Great Master by whom they were first expounded. He was himself a teacher, and the guide and model of all Christian teachers.

In a presence so venerable for learning, wisdom, and piety, it is with unaffected diffidence that I approach a subject of so much difficulty and importance. I do not, however, aspire to teach this reverend body. My humble ambition will be content to utter a few obvious thoughts; but though of easy discovery, it is not the less necessary that we give to them frequent and earnest consideration.

As we are the ministers of one who was himself a public instructor, we are bound to consider, *what* he taught and *how* he taught. "For they (says Jeremy Taylor) who be doctors and teachers of others, must, in their accesses and degrees of discipline, learn of him, who is over us in the mysteries of religion."

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The sacred office involves relations the most solemn. It is to mankind the vehicle of communications which affect, in the most decisive manner, interests as vast as the soul, and as imperishable as its immortality. In an office of so much responsibility, the need of divine guidance is most urgent. This guidance we have in Him, who gives us a "good example," both in the matter and manner of Gospel instruction.

In the particular consideration of the subject proposed, the Ministry of our Lord, let us examine—

- I. His *doctrine*; and
- II. His *manner* as a public teacher.

#### I. HIS DOCTRINE.

In every system of instruction, philosophical and religious, there are certain elementary principles, on which as a basis are founded all its statements, and from which flow all its conclusions. These doctrines are a law to the whole system, determining both its form and its exposition. What are these interior principles, it becomes necessary first to understand, in order to an intelligent and just apprehension of the scheme of which they are the logical elements.

What, then, let us inquire, were the doctrinal elements of our Saviour's Ministry? Now, the doctrines of our Lord, without having any formal and connected statement, will nevertheless be found to be perfectly clear and distinct, and of a nature well calculated to impart a majesty and authority to his teachings above that of the Scribes.

The doctrinal principles of the Great Teacher are few, simple, grave, and deeply ethical; and from these he never departs. Whatever the circumstances of his work, whatever his immediate design, his principles are ever the same. Whether arguing with the doctors, discussing propositions with the Pharisees, or discoursing to the common people, his teaching revolves in the same system of truths, in the illustration and enforcement of the same great principles. Jesus never wandered amid visions; he was never betrayed into the regions of the imagination; he had no taste for unsatisfying speculations, but is content with the statement of a few simple and important propositions.

In presenting a few of the great principles by which our Saviour's ministry was characterized, we will consider them,

1. Under his doctrine of God;
2. His doctrine of Man.

##### 1. *Doctrine of God.*

The doctrines of our Saviour were not philosophical in the sense of being deductions from nature, from the laws of man, or of society, but they are theological in that they not only treat of God, but are derived *immediately* from God.

It cannot fail to strike the discerning mind, that in our Saviour's Ministry, the prominent idea exhibited—the great idea—

the ever-present idea—is God. The Supreme God—spiritual, holy, and almighty—is the grand subject of its disclosures. In this respect his ministry was singular and extraordinary. Among his own people, the Scribes repeated the traditions of the Elders, and the speculations of the Rabbins. In the schools of Gentile learning, philosophy was the subject. But Jesus took neither Jewish masters nor Greek sages for his guide. He did not teach philosophy, but *theology*. God, the Great Father and Supreme Governor of all, is the fundamental element of his teaching. All his doctrines are but the beaming radii of a system of which God is the grand and radiant centre. From this source flows all that light, which clothes his statements and conclusions with irresistible power and conviction.

He nowhere attempts to prove his doctrine of God; he takes it for granted—assumes that it is a self-evident proposition, written on the hearts of men. From this doctrine he deduces the natural obligation to obey and love God, with all the heart and all the strength. And basing this law on the convictions of the human conscience, nothing can be more dignified, authoritative, and convincing, than his enforcement of its great duty. The simple yet sublime explications of Jesus concerning this subject, have a conclusiveness to which the profound demonstration of Clark, and the grand and eloquent illustrations of Charnock, add nothing.

The Supremacy of God is not an empty term to meet a logical requisition in a doctrinal scheme, and while perhaps stated in form, stripped in reality, by presumptuous limitations, of its true glory. Jesus exhibits the Eternal Father as the rightful Governor and actual disposer of the world: comprehending in his counsel all events, the fall of the little sparrow, and the numbering the hairs of our heads, as well as the fall of empires and the destiny of angels; and as the Supreme and just Governor, ordering his elections according to his own pleasure, whether in respect to the temporal or eternal interests of men. It was on this subject Jesus said, "Lord of Heaven and Earth, thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." And when men would presume to question the wisdom and justice of his sovereign appointments, he tells them by an impressive parable, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? So the first shall be last, and the last first; for many are called but few chosen."

God the Supreme, in the august depths of his own eternal wisdom and goodness, fixes every event, and settles the destiny of every creature. To this great fact the Saviour appeals—at one time as a rebuke to pride and presumption, and at another, as an encouragement to patience, confidence, and resignation. How impressive and beautiful that illustration of Providence

which is given to the disciples in the Sermon on the Mount—“Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?”

But why should we particularize? The Great Master never speaks without reference to God. All his divine teachings are the emanations of this central light. All his moral inculcations are inspired by this sublime type in his own mind. The agency of an Almighty God, supreme and universal in nature and grace, is the great truth which he never suffers to escape the minds of his hearers. Such was the doctrine of Jesus respecting God. Can anything be more impressive or sublime? More full of just, awful, and comprehensive views of the character and government of the Most High?

But as further illustrating the Ministry of Christ, let us consider,

## 2. *His Doctrine of Man.*

(1.) *Responsibility.* Man is recognized as a moral being, sustaining relations to God and man, and as acting freely in these relations. Jesus conforms his teachings on human responsibility, to the experience and convictions of men. He does not pause to reason on the subject, to adjust the necessity of pre-determination to the liberty of the agent. What do we see? We behold him who insists upon the absolute sovereignty of God—ascending the while to the awful heights of predestination, coming down without faltering—without the slightest nervous disturbance, to insist with equal decision and authority on the most absolute human responsibility. Did Jesus find the harmony of these extremes? Did his all-discerning mind perceive no inconsistency in statements which arrogant philosophy has dared to denominate absurd and contradictory? If to Him, who knew all things, there be nothing irreconcilable in the sovereignty of God with the responsibility of man, then may they be admitted as harmonious facts, though the weakness of human reason may be at fault in demonstrating the relations of this harmony. The Great Master insists on the responsibility of all men, every where. He incorporates it in all his discourses, and bears it aloft as the grand argument by which to enforce the multifarious lessons of human duty. Throughout that wonderful Sermon on the Mount, this principle runs as a moral ligament to bind its mighty ethics on the consciences and hearts of men.

No matter how profound and entire the deep of human corruption, and how certainly and wholly evil flows the stream of human action from such a source, our Saviour abates nothing of human responsibility on that account. In the natural obligations of man, and in the nature of voluntary moral action, he

lays his principle of accountability as just as the unchangeable righteousness of the divine government. Sanctioned by the convictions of human consciousness, the heart responds to the truthful and terrible statement. Recoil from it—dread it as we may—the enlightened conscience must yet admit its truth.

Jesus employs this weighty principle in all his labors to instruct and reform men. I do not say that we may not reason with men on the abstract beauty and usefulness of virtue, and the abstract hatefulness and hurtfulness of sin. But to reason against the tide of depraved appetite, and for the claims of an absent and unappreciated virtue, will be more interesting to the moralist than profitable to the sinner. Jesus shows us a more excellent way. He appeals to the great principle of responsibility, and enforces duty thereby.

In illustration of this principle, how striking are many of the parables! how impressive that of the talents, and that of the stewardship! As we read the solemn language of representation, a deeper sense of responsibility is awakened within us. We feel it is no trifling thing to live in a world where every action and every thought has its relation to a coming judgment. Under the simple teachings of Jesus, we feel our intimate relation to God our Judge. Eternity seems to overshadow time; and intermingling its own vast realities with the actions of the present life, it imparts a deeper solemnity to all, because binding the conscience to accountability in all.

Thus did Jesus exhibit the principle of responsibility. His teachings, pervaded by so weighty a matter, might well occasion the people to say of him, "Never man spake as this man."

The teachings of our Lord respecting man, embrace another important principle. It is,

(2.) *Man's corrupt and sinful state.* On the basis of this melancholy fact, that man is fallen, Jesus began his public ministry. With that consummate wisdom which distinguished every thing he did, he recognizes the great evil at once, and begins by laying the axe at the root of the tree. John was a reformer, but Jesus a regenerator. The cleansing of the outside of the cup and platter was not enough in those eyes which discerned the heart to be full of all corruption.

John presents, in a comparative light, the true nature of our Saviour's ministry. "I am come (he says) baptizing with water; but he that cometh after me baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Such was the extraordinary ministry of our Lord. In a work so radical, we discover the utter ruin of the human soul.

In the treatment of Nicodemus, we have an explicit testimony to man's real condition. The fact, with the teachings to which it gave rise, admits of the one construction only, that man is wholly ruined. That one so excellent, so candid, so inquiring, and so accomplished in all the visible decencies of religion as this "master in Israel," still needed the new birth, is a fact that



leaves us in little doubt of the great want of mankind. And then the declaration which accompanies the fact, is as conclusive as words can make it, that "that which is born of flesh is flesh"—is corrupt, depraved, sinful.

Jesus enters into no formal statement of his doctrine; it was not his manner, for he did not follow the logicians. But in all his dealings with men he assumes that they are fallen and sinful. It was his habitual effort to lead them to the knowledge of themselves that they might discover the depravity of their hearts. From outward fairness and pharisaic morality, he turns their eyes inward upon the perversity and wickedness of the heart. In the Sermon on the Mount, the virtues which are inculcated, and the tempers insisted on, show precisely what and how great, in his estimation, is the disordered state of the human soul. Every grace there demanded, exposes an opposite gracelessness; and every beatitude pronounced, reveals the deep curse of man's real condition.

Not only are men hopelessly depraved, but their state is as helpless as hopeless. They have rebelled, and so wasted all original virtue by sin, and are so utterly lost, that return to God is impossible. "How can those that are evil speak good things?" inquires the Saviour.

It is in view of this helpless state of man that the Spirit is promised, by whose agency alone the depraved are to be renewed, and the lost reclaimed. Men are taught their absolute dependence. The pride of self-reliance, and the arrogance of human ability, is rebuked and humbled by the declaration, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Even an apostle is assured that all his resolution and decision of purpose are insufficient alone, to preserve him from a great sin. Such is human infirmity in our Saviour's account. Where is the recuperative principle in man, that last element of goodness which has survived the fall, and like Hope in the box of Pandora mitigates the severity of its evil? We find it not in the teaching of Jesus, because Jesus, who knew what was in man, found no such relic of a purer state in his present ruin.

Jesus contemplates human nature as a ruin, noble and immortal indeed, but utter and hopeless. Over the dark miseries of this noble ruin he wept on Mount Olivet; to effect the work of its restoration, he bled on Mount Calvary.

It was the picture of hopeless, universal depravity which Jesus spread out before the minds of the people, which at once commanded their admiration, and excited their hatred. It was by the faithful exhibition of this great truth to men, that they were moved to desire and plot his ruin. It was on this account, Jesus tells the Jews, "ye seek to kill me." And again he says, "the world hateth me, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil."

Such, then, were some of the great principles of our Saviour's doctrine. They were grave in themselves, and deeply affecting mankind. They were principles, touching the character of God and the condition of man, which no Rabbi had ever uttered from the law—which no Gentile sage ever taught from the heights of Philosophy—which had never been heard in Attic grove or Jewish Synagogue. Shall we wonder at the power of Him who taught such wonderful doctrine? It was in the exposition of principles so new and so sublime, so perfectly simple, and yet so deeply practical and momentous, that Jesus taught with an unexampled authority and power, "and not as the Scribes."

But if the *doctrine* of our Lord was of a nature to command and impress, we shall find that—

II. *His MANNER was in perfect harmony with the MATTER of his instructions.*

1. The leading characteristic of our Saviour's manner as a public teacher was *earnestness*. There is a histrionic earnestness which the deep player assumes as an artistic propriety demanded by his subject. There is an artificial earnestness, an *ad captandum* zeal to meet popular expectations, and awaken its applause, and there is a structural earnestness, a susceptibility to certain combinations of thought and forms of imagery and expressions, like the chords of the harp, strung to certain impulses of the air. But the earnestness of the Great Master was neither professional nor emotional. The weighty matters which he taught were the utterances of the deepest convictions. The doctrine of his ministry, in all its relations and momentousness, had a vital existence in his understanding, and in his heart. He could say, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." That which Jesus proclaimed he felt in his deepest reason. The doctrine which he taught authenticated itself in the vivid sentiment and realizations of his mind. In a word, from the earnestness of his soul his mouth spake,

The message of the Gospel is certainly a communication grave and important in the last degree. The just appreciation of its nature will be followed by earnestness in its announcement. Christ had this earnestness, because he had the full measure of such appreciation.

2. The earnestness of Christ was evinced in the *simplicity of his teachings*. True earnestness, flowing from deep conviction is, perhaps, always simple. Great thoughts, like costly stones, and precious diamonds, appear best in the simplest settings. The soul inspired by a vast truth, or laboring to disclose a great conviction, rejects the useless ornaments of rhetoric, and selects the plainest form of illustration. The manner of Jesus was perspicuous simplicity; an inartificial transparency of language is the chosen expression of his deep convictions.

In his discourses it is the truth *alone* the Great Master would

hold up to contemplation. It is some great principle he would bring before the mind, and this object is never obscured nor hindered by the form of the illustration. Throughout his whole ministry, whether addressed to crowds or individuals, whether to lawyers or laborers, whether in the gorgeous courts of the temple, or among the homely scenes of Galilee, there is exhibited the same chaste simplicity, because in all there is the same intellectual earnestness. Jesus had no gifts of eloquence to parade, no accomplishments of knowledge to display, no facetiousness of wit to sport; but he had a Gospel of incomparable solemnity to preach, and "how is he straitened till it be accomplished." In this simplicity Jesus finds followers among those disciples who drink deepest of his spirit. Of such, no one of our day has had more of this spirit, or been more remarkable for this excellence, than the late venerable and pious Archibald Alexander. His well known simplicity was only equalled by his deep earnestness. Like the Master whom he followed, he was simple, because he had great and earnest thoughts to communicate.

3. The earnestness of Jesus was further evinced by the *consistency of his life with his doctrine*. The principles which were illustrated by his ministry, occupied habitually the thoughts of his mind. He felt them not only when under occasional discussion, but in all places and at all times. There were moments of relaxation when he escaped from the physical toils of his ministry, but from the influence of his principles, and the force of his convictions, his mind never escapes. Jesus taught nothing which he did not always feel. His life was the exact and ever-faithful transcript of his principles. In the easy, familiar intercourse of friendship with his disciples, or in the bosom of the beloved family of Bethany, he throws off nothing of the habitual gravity, devotion, and spirituality inspired by his principles. In all places, and among all men he maintains unity of character—a dignified consistency with himself. It was the depth of his convictions, and the sincerity of his soul which gave to Jesus the highest form of earnestness—the earnestness of consistency.

4. The earnestness of Jesus was still further manifested in the *decision and boldness of his manner*. The honor of the truth and the immortal interests of men, constitute an object superior to every other. A just apprehension of this object, will raise the minister of Christ above a time-serving and a man-pleasing spirit. Honest convictions despise the temporizing suggestions of policy as low and unworthy. In the vindication of the truth, and in the enforcement of its obligations, Jesus was bold and unsparing. The force of his own clear perceptions made him superior to any place, or any presence. He was only intent on the honor of the truth, and the glory of the Father. Truly did he fulfil the prediction of the prophet, "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked."



5. It was the manner of Jesus to *rely on a few great general principles* in the work of human reform. It appears to have been our Saviour's philosophy, that to reform the world, and correct the vices of the social life of mankind, what is most needed, is the implantation of right principles. Men have gone down in degeneracy under the perverting operation of evil principles. Their understandings are blind, and their "foolish heart is darkened," and they are now to be raised up and set right, by those fundamental inculcations which comprehend all the rights, and all the duties of man.

Jesus relied on his Gospel to effect the desired reform. He strikes at no particular evil of the social organization of his times. He does not come to the surface of society with his measures of reform, but he descends to the foundation, and disseminates the leaven of correction at the roots of the social tree. Though he lived under a relentless despotism, he did not preach democracy. Though he moved amid scenes of social corruption, he did not organize against any of its forms. Though the world around him rung with the cries and sufferings of the oppressed, yet he raises no standard of revolt, inculcates no violent redress. On the contrary, he enjoins a religious patience, trusting in God and the operation of the Gospel, for the desired improvement of society and mankind.

Jesus was not indifferent to the evils of society ; but to reform the world, he relied on the moral operation of his great evangelic principles. He would bring men up to the moralities of life, by first teaching them the great principles of life. In this manner, silently, and without violence, does he pursue his great work. It was by "the foolishness of preaching" he would save man, and organize against individual and popular sins. Such was the manner of Jesus. It may not imply that other modes of social improvement are unlawful, but this is the "*more excellent way*;" which in our times there is danger of losing sight of. Amid the cry and dust of parties and societies, the bright example of the Master escapes us, and we forget that the Gospel is "the wisdom and power of God to salvation."

On the manner of Christ as an instructor, we might greatly enlarge, by adding many graces of character which contribute to the finish, perfection, and glory of the whole. We can barely allude to his self-denial, his superiority to the world, his condescension, his meekness, his diligence, and his prayerfulness.

The last characteristic of our Saviour's manner we now would notice, is his *tenderness*. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" for its redemption. The compassion which inspired the enterprize, accompanied the World's Missionary, as the deep, tender, absorbing sentiment of his soul. How he manifested this sentiment, would be to repeat the whole story of his life. It is true, in this tenderness there is no complacency—no love of approbation ; it was a compassionate

feeling, awakened by the guilty, blind, suffering condition of the world. But it was a profound tenderness, which no insolence of treatment, no wanton abuse, no violence, no relentless persecutions could extinguish in his bosom. "He was despised and rejected of men, they hid, as it were, their faces from him; he was despised, and they esteemed him not," but his pity endured—it survived the cruel return.

Jesus, our blessed Master, loved men in spite of their unloveliness—in spite of their unprovoked enmity. The tide of his compassion seemed to swell in proportion to the wickedness that opposed it. Over that city capable of the darkest purpose ever formed and enacted on earth, he shed the tears of his compassion, and uttered words of the most tender lament which ever fell on the notice of a guilty world. And on that cross, the last device of ingenious wickedness, planted by his enemies, and gloated on by malignant eyes, he gave the finishing display of his unextinguishable pity, in his prayer for his murderers.

Such, fathers and brethren, is the great Scribe of our profession—our Master and our model. We have presented him only in those clerical aspects of his character which pertain to him as a model, not wholly beyond our approach and imitation. When we contemplate the doctrine and character of Jesus, are we surprised that "he taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes?" In these alone, without the aid of his higher nature, there was enough to account for his wonderful power over the minds of men.

In his character of Teacher, is there no reason, alas! for a closer imitation of Jesus, by his servants in the ministry of reconciliation? Where is that purity and simplicity of doctrine, and where are the graces of character and manner which shone in the Master, and should adorn his servants? Doubtless they exist as the holy anointing of many a Christian pastor, and diffuse an influence over many a privileged parish, giving authority and progress to the truth among men. Such pure, earnest, Christ-imitating lovers and preachers of the truth, cannot fail of success. Following the Master, they will receive the Master's blessing. To such holy men the promise was given, and will be fulfilled, "Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you"—"I, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The dignity of our office, its sacredness, the solemnity of its consequences, all urge us to comprehend and feel the nature of its duties in the contemplation of Him, who has put us into this ministry. From Jesus alone we learn that doctrine, and imbibe that spirit which are fundamental to a successful ministry. What is our work, but the exaltation of Christ before men? On him are centred the hopes of a fallen world. Of him then let us learn, and know nothing "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

## SERMON -DXCIX.

BY REV. SAMUEL HARRIS,

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## THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD.

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."—MARK xii. 30.

WERE I to go to you, my hearers, and ask you, one by one, "Do you love God?" few of you would be willing distinctly to own that you love him not. Yet if Christ should go through the assembly to pronounce his judgment, to how many might he say, as to the ancient Jews, "I know you that ye have not the love of God in you?" This common reluctance to acknowledge the absence of love to God may be owing to indistinct apprehensions of what is meant by loving him. The single object of this discourse will be to present THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD.\*

I. True love to God must be founded on a *correct knowledge of his character.*

If you were standing on the summit of the Brocken, among the Hartz mountains, some pleasant morning at sunrise, you might see the famous spectre whose mysterious appearance so often has terrified the simple inhabitants. Science has shown it to be only a colossal shadow of the spectator, which, under peculiar circumstances, the rising sun paints on an opposite cloud; but it was long taken for a supernatural object, and the terror-stricken observer bowed down in awe before a magnified image of himself. Just such is God, as he is conceived of by many—nothing better than a magnified image of themselves. This is the charge brought by God himself: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself."

The gods of the heathen, it is well known, are only magnified men, having all the evil passions of men:

"Gods changeful, jealous, passionate, unjust,  
Whose attributes are rage, revenge, and lust."

Minds enlightened by the Bible are disgusted with the grossness

\* The reader will find a full discussion of this subject in Dr. Bellamy's unrivaled work, entitled, "True religion delineated and distinguished from all counterfeits." While this sermon is an independent discussion of the subject, occasional coincidence of thought will be noticed, which it has not been found possible to avoid.

of this error; yet, in a more refined form, they embrace it, and shape their idea of God from their own wishes, rather than from the truth. Loving sin themselves, they do not appreciate the holiness of God, which abhors and opposes every sin with an infinite intensity. Partial always to themselves, they do not appreciate the impartiality of God, who condemns them according to their deserts. Regarding God's love as a fondness, blind and partial as their own, they fail to recognize, in their harmony, "the goodness and the severity of God." Changeful themselves, they do not appreciate God's unchangeableness, alike in his requirements, his threatenings, and his promises. Short-sighted and impatient, they do not appreciate the eternal plans of Him with whom one day is as a thousand years, and who, through the changes of many generations, pursues his purpose to its accomplishment. Accustomed to act with prime reference to their own interests, they sometimes even settle it as a first principle of their creed, that God must always act, as they do, for their personal good, and that, whatever their character, he will eternally busy himself to make them blessed; so that God is nothing but the man's own selfish wishes, embodied and clothed with almightiness. Selfishness itself can never be conscious of opposition to such a God. Sin itself will love God, if he is pictured as what the sinner wishes him to be, rather than what he is. So Paul, in his impenitence, thought that he loved God—nay, that he had an extraordinary zeal for him; but he says, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." When the law of God, applied to his conscience, showed him God's true character, he found himself an enemy of God. Such a discovery is essential to the beginning of true love to God in every unrenowned heart. True love to God fastens, not on a god of the human imagination, but on the God of the Bible—the holy, the just, the good.

## II. Love to God implies *complacency in his character.*

Mere knowledge does not insure love. If the heart delights not in a character, the knowledge of that character will awaken hatred; and in this case, the clearer and more accurate the knowledge, the greater the dislike. The more closely opposite natures are made to know each other, and are brought into contact, the more powerfully they are repelled. Hence a clear knowledge of God in those whose hearts do not delight in him, only arouses the hidden enmity of the heart. Satan, of all creatures, knows God the best, and hates him the most. Hence, while those who love God, when they go into his presence in eternity, and there discover his character as they had never discovered it before, break out uncontrollably into praise,—those of a contrary character, when they, in eternity, behold God in all his holiness and glory—when they behold him as he actually is—begin at once, and continue for ever, to curse and to blaspheme him.

You sometimes say of a man, "The more I know him, the more I dislike him." This may be owing to his wickedness, which you more and more discover. But his must be a fearful depravity, if, the more clearly and correctly he knows the actual character of God's spotless holiness, the more he dislikes it. Yet such must be the fact, unless there be in the heart a complacency in God's character. On this point, therefore, I insist, that love to God implies complacency or delight in his character.

This complacency implies delight in God. You see a company of men before a fine painting; some will be enraptured with its beauty; others will express no delight in it. The reason is, that the former have, the latter have not, a taste for such beauties. There is a beauty in holiness as really as in a painting; the highest of all beauty is the beauty of holiness; and the highest form of that highest beauty is the beauty of holiness as it appears in God. They who love God appreciate that beauty; they delight in it; they love to contemplate it as it appears in God's attributes, as it is revealed in his Word, as it is exhibited in his acts of providence and grace, and especially as it shines in Jesus Christ. So it is with the angels and the glorified spirits: they are enraptured with the loveliness of God's character, so that they never tire of praising it; "they rest not day and night, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.'" So it is, in their measure, with all who love God on earth: they are delighted with the holiness of his character; the more they see of him, as he has revealed himself in his word and his works, the more they delight in him; and they say, "Who is a God like unto thee? Thy name alone is excellent, and thy glory is exalted above the heavens."

It is because those who love God feel this complacency in his character that praise is the natural language of love.

But complacency in God implies more than that delight in him which expends itself in contemplating and praising him; it implies, also, oneness of feeling with God; oneness of desires and aims, and similarity of disposition. It implies loving what God loves, and abhorring what he abhors.

Entire contrariety of disposition makes complete, full-orbed love impossible. A virtuous person cannot render perfect love to a vicious one; nor a vicious person to the virtuous. I know that a poet has ascribed to woman such words as these:

"I know not, I ask not, if there's guilt in thy heart;  
I but know that I love thee, whatever thou art."

And these words are continually quoted as the strongest expression, the very highest triumph of woman's love. But, my hearers, the love that is not impaired, that does not lose something in discovering the criminality of its object, must be a love that sympathizes with that criminality. It is possible, indeed, for virtuous love to survive even that deadliest blow—the discovery



of criminality in the person loved. The parent may love his child, the wife her husband, the sister her brother, the son his parent, after the loved one has lost in drunkenness all that dignifies humanity. That love may follow its cherished object in infamy, yearn over him in prison and on the scaffold, and garner up his memory, when his name, by all the world beside, is consigned to loathing. But if the heart which thus loves is itself virtuous, that love, strong as it is, yet wants a most important element: it is love without esteem; it is love without complacency; it is the conflict in which nature and good-will draw you toward one who is bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, and yet every exhibition of his character repels you with shuddering abhorrence. It is love, indeed—love living and active—but love that is maimed, and bleeds and groans as it goes forth to yearn over the cherished one. If your own heart is virtuous, criminality in one you love opens an impassible chasm between your soul and his. You two can never be one again, unless you sink to sympathy with his pollution, or he rises to delight in your virtue.

Precisely this deficiency exists in God's love to impenitent sinners. It is love throbbing with the pulsations of God's infinite heart, strong even unto the cross for their rescue; outlasting in the pleadings of a divine compassion years of crime and rebellion, yet destitute of the most essential element of love—destitute of complacency—abhorring the character of the sinner with an intensity of which only God is capable.

But if this contrariety of character impairs and cripples even the love of the virtuous for the vicious, how much more the love of the vicious heart. If the father's love for the prodigal son is impaired by the son's criminality, how much more the son, while in the midst of his riot and his harlots, was void of true love to his father. If even the love of God to sinners is robbed of its most precious element by this contrariety of character, how destitute of true love to God is the sinner in his worldliness and disobedience. Complacency in God, sweet accord with his character, he has none. He is opposed to God, and God is opposed to him.

Sin, then, is a fearful chasm between the sinner and God, which can in no way be crossed, unless God lay aside his holiness, sink to delight in sin, and fold the foulest to his bosom; or unless the sinner turn from his sins, and, washed and made clean, be folded to the bosom of infinite purity and love. This is the great gulf fixed. In the world to come, impassible from either side; in this life, the same yawning gulf, separating the sinner from God, until, by repentance, he returns and bows, in faith and submission, before the holy throne.

Here you may see the application to yourselves, it may be, of those fearful words: "The carnal mind is enmity against God." It is difficult for the most of those whom we usually see in this

house of God—for you who, if you think of God at all, think of him respectfully—for you who honor and support the institutions of religion—for you whose every thought of religion is kind and respectful—it is difficult for you to persuade yourselves that this fearful character belongs to you. You are ready to say: “It must be applicable only to those blasphemers who oppose religion in all its institutions, and hurl defiance at the throne of God.” My hearers, I do not charge you with blasphemy or disrespect for religion; I do not charge you, that, in your inmost thoughts, you are conscious of thinking of God with hatred. But the charge is, that you have not complacency in God’s character; that there is a contrariety between your disposition, your aims, your cherished plans, and God’s. The energies of God’s moral nature are concentrated in abhorrence of sin: you are careless about the fact that you are a sinner; you sometimes even acknowledge, “I know that I am a sinner, but cannot feel it.” God has shown his earnestness to deliver men from sin in all the wondrous history of the incarnation and the cross: he speaks it in all the earnest warnings and entreaties of the Gospel. But you are a sinner, and are careless; you are the person described in those astonishing words—a CARELESS SINNER. The Son of God shed his blood for sin; you shed not a tear. God is intent on establishing Christ’s kingdom in the world; you make not this the great end of your endeavors; it is not the object on which your heart is set: your object is self and the world. God lives to do good; you live to please self. God is love; you are selfishness. Can there be a greater contrariety of aims, of interests, of feelings, of character, than between yourself and God? And does not this make applicable, as a description of your character, the emphatic words, “Enmity against God?” Be assured, there is no true love to God without complacency in him—complacency which implies both delight in the beauty of his holiness and a heart to praise it, and an agreement of disposition, aims, and character, with his. And he who has been separated from God by sin can begin to love him only by returning in penitence and trust, and submitting cordially to all his will.

It must be added, that this complacency in God, when it really exists, will continually be producing assimilation to him. This is a necessary effect of such love.

“Whate’er thou lovest, man, that, too, become thou must:  
God, if thou lovest God; dust, if thou lovest dust.”

Because love causes delight in contemplating the beloved character, and produces sympathy and accord of tastes, aims, and desires, there must result a growing assimilation of character. A virtuous woman, however she may love a vicious son or husband, withholds this highest element of love—esteem and complacency; and this withholding is essential to save her from becoming like him. When she begins to lose her abhorrence

for his character, the last stay of her virtue is broken, and she sinks into the likeness of him she loves. And once implant in the heart of that wanderer a love for some virtuous one—once awaken him to feel a kindling delight in this character beaming on him from the object of his love, and his reform is already begun, and will continue, if that love continues, till he attains the likeness of that virtue, the love of which has already begun to refresh his soul.

So it is in the affairs of religion—and a fearful thought it is to the worldling—to those whose hearts delight in the low and debasing. If you are saying to gold, "Thou art my hope," and to the most fine gold, "Thou art my confidence;" if your heart is fastened on sensual joys, or idolizes the objects of ambition—"Whate'er thou lovest, man, that, too, become thou must"—slowly but inevitably, by the silent influences of that very love, must your own heart be changed into the likeness of the earthly, the sensual, the devilish. But when once you begin to delight in the beauty of God's holiness—when your heart begins to beat in unison with his, going out in the same pure desires toward the same holy end, it is the beginning, however faint, of that assimilation to God which shall issue in the fulfilment of the sublimest promise ever made to man: "Ye shall see him as he is, and shall be like him:" ye shall see him in all the glories which awaken the enraptured praises of angels, and even thus ye shall be like him.

III. Love to God implies *desire for him*. Delight in his character awakens desire for his person.

We find our happiness in those whom we love. If we love God, we find our happiness in him. This was expressed by the saints of old in language such as this: "Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come near even unto his seat." "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee. As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee. My soul followeth hard after God. There be many that say, 'Who will show us any good?' Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me."

We desire a better acquaintance with those whom we love. If we love God, we study with interest his character as revealed in his word and in his works, for the purpose of becoming better acquainted with him. So Moses prayed, "O Lord, I beseech thee, show me thy glory."

We are pained to be separated from those whom we love, and we think of them much in absence; so if we love God, we shall think of him; we shall be able to say with the Psalmist, "I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches. When I awake, I am still with thee."

We seek the society of those whom we love; so if we love

God we seek communion with him. Prayer, which is speaking to God, is our delight. The closet, where we offer our requests, and receive the quickening of his Spirit, is a loved and frequented spot; and even amid the bustle of the world, we walk with God, and commune with him in the silence of our own spirits. Thus shall we, like the apostle, "continue in prayer, and watch thereunto with all perseverance and supplication, night and day, praying exceedingly."

We value the favor of those whom we love. Their displeasure cuts to the heart; but we are happy in their smile and their return of our confidence and affection. If we love God, we dread his displeasure; it grieves us to the very heart to think that we have displeased him; we are watchful not to disregard his will. But his favor is our joy.

"Let earth, with all its joys, combine;  
While Thou art near, in vain they call:  
One smile—one blissful smile of thine,  
My dearest Lord, outweighs them all."

"Thy loving kindness is better than life." The loving soul, renouncing all else, finds its blessedness in God. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

IV. Love to God implies *benevolence* or *goodwill*. This is implied in all love; we long to do good to those whom we love. If we love God, we feel goodwill toward him. But it is impossible to bestow favors on God, because he has no need. Goodwill toward him must show itself in some other way. This is by seeking to glorify him. If he were a creature, needy and dependent, goodwill would show itself by ministering to his need. He is the Creator and Lord of all; goodwill shows itself by giving to him the glory due unto his name.

God claims to be the Sovereign of the universe; he claims the right to rule over all his creatures. Says Bellamy, "He is disposed to take state to himself, and honor, and majesty, the kingdom, the power and the glory; and he sets up himself as the Most High God, supreme Lord, and sovereign Governor of the whole world; and bids all worlds adore him, and be in most perfect subjection to him, and that with all their hearts; and esteems the wretch who does not account this his highest happiness worthy of eternal damnation. God thinks it infinitely becomes him to set himself up for a God, and to command all the world to adore him. He thinks himself fit to govern the world, and that the throne is his proper place, and that all love, honor, and obedience, are his due. 'I am the Lord,' says he, 'and beside me there is no God. I am Jehovah; that is my name; and

my glory will I not give to another. And thus shall ye do, for I am the Lord. And cursed be every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.' Now, it would be infinitely wicked for the highest angel in heaven to assume any of this honor to himself; but it infinitely becomes the Most High God thus to do." If we love God, his conduct in this will please us; it will appear to us fit and right; we shall rejoice to see him taking the throne, and surrounding himself with state, and making all creatures minister to his glory. Our first and strongest desire will be for his honor; so that when we pray we shall wish to begin with the petition which is set down for us first in the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be thy name;" and we shall not find in our hearts to close except with the ascription there enjoined, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever." The language of our hearts will be, "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice. Be thou exalted above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth. Let the lofty looks of man be humbled, and the haughtiness of man be brought low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted."

This disposition will lead us, also, to desire to have all the world, in like manner, rejoice in God's supremacy, and give him the glory due unto his name. Hence it sometimes is found giving utterance to the strongest desires that all creatures would join in extolling God, calling even on sun, moon and stars, earth, air and sea, birds, beasts and fishes, mountains and all hills, the trees and the winds, to praise him. "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength. Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Let them praise the name of the Lord; for his name alone is excellent."

And because God has sent his Son into the world, and set up his cross; because he has set his heart on bringing sinners to Christ, and establishing his kingdom, good-will toward God will be good-will toward his kingdom, which will concern itself with intense zeal to advance its interests and to bring men to Christ. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." The Church, the bride of Christ, joins with his Spirit in extending the invitations of the Gospel. "And let him that heareth, say, Come." Every one who hears and accepts the invitation becomes animated by the same interest in the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, and joins with the Spirit in extending the invitations of the Gospel.

So great and so disinterested is this concern for God's honor and the advancement of his cause, that whatever is likely to dishonor God causes the most grievous anxiety, and no personal advantage can be so much as looked at as a compensation. 'Thus says God to Moses: 'This is a stiff-necked people; let me alone that I may destroy them in a moment; and I will make of thee a great nation.' But says Moses: 'What will become of



thy great name ? What will the Egyptians say ? What will all the nations round about say ? And he mourns and wrestles, cries and prays, begs and pleads, as if his heart would break ; and says he, ' If I may not be heard, but this dishonor and reproach must come upon thy name, it cannot comfort me to tell me of making me a great nation : pray, let me rather die, and be forgotten forever, and let not my name be numbered among the living ; let it be blotted out of thy book.' Well, says God, ' I will hear thee. But as truly as I live, the whole world shall know what a holy and sin-hating God I am ; for the carcasses of all these who have treated me thus shall fall in the wilderness, and here they shall wander till forty years are accomplished.' And now Moses is content to forego the greatness promised to himself, and to forego the entrance to the promised land, to live all his remaining days in the wilderness, and do, and suffer, and undergo anything, if God will but take care of his great name."

V. Love implies a *desire to please*. This thought is involved in what has been already said, but it deserves a separate consideration.

When little Velma was about to go to church one morning, her father asked her if it did not tire her to sit still so long. She said it did. " Then," said he, " it will be better for you to stay at home with me." " No," she answered ; " I shall go. Cousin says God wants to have us ; and it is not much to do it, if he wants us to." This is most childlike and artless, and yet it is the expression of love, foregoing personal comfort with the simple motive of pleasing the one we love—of doing what " he wants us to." Childlike as it is, it is the most powerful motive of the Gospel. It is peculiar to the Gospel to reveal God in Christ as a personal friend, to be loved at once with a childlike artlessness and an overpowering devotedness. It is the yearning of love to do something for its object ; but God is so great, what present, what token of love, can we bring him ? What can we do for him ? The Gospel brings him near to us in Christ, as a personal friend, and gives us the privilege of doing something for him—of acting with the simple desire to please him. Religion presents itself often with the sanctions and insignia of authority ; it appeals to the sense of duty ; it comes with the majesty of sublime principle. But in the heart renewed under the Gospel, it wells up as the outgushing of a simple, childlike love—simple, yet mighty ; and under its power, the disciple rejoices in toil and suffering, to please the Redeemer, whom, not having seen, he loves. Christ comes and says, " Do this for my sake ;" and this is the peculiar and the conquering motive of the Gospel. " The love of Christ constraineth us." We labor for his sake. There would be more simplicity, power, and blessedness in our religion,

if, joined with the sternness of duty and the majesty of principle, there were more of this artless, devoted love to the person of Christ; if oftener, under the toils of life, we listened to his voice, saying, "Do this for my sake," and were animated by the thought that we please him by our endeavors.

It is the nature of love to enthrone its object. The requests of those whom we love come with the force of commands; and their authority is proportioned to the degree of our love. Whatever we love best must therefore be enthroned the absolute monarch of our hearts. If love even to our fellow-creatures has a power to enthrone them, and make their slightest wishes law, how much more must all true love to the great God enthrone him in the heart, and give authority to even the least of his commands. If we love God, we shall be bent on keeping his commandments, and that not by constraint, but with the eagerness of love, which sacredly regards his slightest wish as law—which accepts his commands, not as fetters, but as ornaments of grace to the head, as bracelets on the hands, and a chain of gold about the neck.

God is the only being worthy of supreme affection, and the only being whom it is safe thus to love, and by loving to enthrone. Because love, in proportion to its strength, enthrones the beloved object, and binds the loving heart in willing servitude, there is something terrific in the very thought of supreme love for what is sinful and unworthy—of giving the mastery of the soul, the control of all hidden springs of action, to base men or to ignoble objects. If it be gold that is thus loved, or sensual pleasures, or the hollow echoes of human applause—alas, that a soul should love, and, by loving, should enthrone such objects, and abase itself in willing slavery to be their drudge and pander! God is the only being worthy of supreme love; the only being whom it is safe thus to love, and, by loving, to enthrone the absolute monarch of the heart.

Such are the characteristics of true love to God. Whether you exercise this love or not, it is not for me to decide. I leave the question to the scrutiny and decision of your own consciences, and of God, who judgeth the heart. But this I must say—without such love, you are without hope and without God in the world. There is no holiness in heaven—no, not in the highest angel—except what springs from true love to God. There is no religion on earth, no preparation for heaven, except in love to God. Without it, you are alienated from your Maker, and the subject of his wrath; you are fitting yourself for everlasting banishment from the bosom of his holiness and the heaven of his glory. O, creatures of God, can you see nothing in his character which awakens your heart to love? Is there nothing in the majesty of his throne—nothing in the beauty of his holiness—nothing in the

tenderness of the cross, which awakens one throb of emotion, one breath of praise, one aspiration to be like him? In all that is glorious in God, can you see nothing to love? Oh, that, as you gaze on his excellence, it were the language of your hearts,

"This is the God whom we do love;  
This is the God whom we adore;  
In him we trust; to him we live:  
He is our all for evermore."

"This God is our God for ever and ever. He shall be our guide even until death."

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#### A FATHER'S INFLUENCE.

It must exert a vast influence upon a parent to reflect how perfectly God has subjected the minds of his children to his forming hand. His authority is absolute. In this respect he cannot possibly have any higher advantage. As a ruler, no one questions his right to entire obedience. There is no thought of displacing him by election. There are no tendencies to revolution in his little empire. His subjects are so manifestly inferior and dependent, that there is no necessity for tumults within, nor is there any considerable danger of interferences from without. He has the power of completely controlling their instruction. Furnished with the richest stores of knowledge in the Divine Word, he employs the same truths in the same divine connections which God employs in the conversion and sanctification of men. He makes the authority of God himself subserve his purpose. He has the pre-occupancy of the mind and the promised aid of the Holy Spirit. It is, perhaps, impossible for us to appreciate the advantage of an access to the mind in precedence of all others, and the value of the opportunity of introducing the doctrines of the Gospel before depravity has had sufficient time, and acquired skill enough, to bar up the avenues of truth. It is obvious, that Christianity, though in every other respect the same, would have been placed under peculiar disadvantages if the human family had been all created, as we suppose angels were, in the maturity of their powers. We know not that the Gospel could be propagated at all in a world full of mature beings, involved in a common rebellion. The power of God, it is true, is not to be limited; but we do know, at least, that his power and wisdom are both magnified by spreading the triumphs of his religion, through the influence of instruction introduced in the happy, favored period of childhood.

It is a high motive, also, to parental faithfulness, to know that it exerts a wide influence in sustaining the blessings of civil government, and in the advancement of spiritual religion. It is highly probable that there would be no civil government on earth if it were not for family government; and it never will be known, till the light of eternity reveals it, how much a few well-governed and well-instructed families do to prevent states and empires from rushing into the horrors of anarchy. Then the example of parental faithfulness, with the blessings that are seen to attend it, powerfully draws men to Christ. Nor does it merely attract men, as individuals, to a spiritual worship of God. It leads families to their Saviour. Many a parent has been won to Christ by seeing how a Christian family is blest through the influence of family religion. And when such a one is turned to God, it is like the conversion of a king among idolatrous tribes: the whole government becomes a sanctified one, and entire households are trained up for the service of the Lord. Besides, no mortal can estimate the influence of paternal faithfulness upon future generations. To a reflecting mind, that is a mighty scheme of influence which is indicated by the words of the prophet: "Tell ye your children of it, and let them tell their children, and their children another generation." That is to say, let holy sentiments, sound instruction, stern principles of right pass from lip to lip, from an individual to a family; from each one of its members to a wider circle; and so on, increasing, in a rapidly augmented ratio, till a multitude, like a nation, shall have their minds and hearts cast in the mould of a godly ancestor.

What a weight of responsibility rests upon a Christian father! Household piety lies at the foundation of all right religious culture, and of the success of the Church of God. There the influence of the Gospel appears in its might, exerting itself under the most advantageous circumstances possible; there is authority absolute, yet tempered with parental affection, softened by maternal kindness, and enforced by a mother's echo of paternal authority, and by the example of a dignified, Sarah-like submission. There is instruction, rich, various, and solid, introduced into the mind in the most favored period. Let parents, then, address themselves to their chief work on earth, the training of their children for the service of God. Let them wait upon the Lord for the aids of his grace. Let them remember that the time is short; that their influence must be exerted now; that they shall soon meet their dear ones at the bar of God; that they shall see them there polluted with sin, scathed with thunder, and crushed to hell; or they shall meet them clothed in robes of unsullied purity, with crowns of gold on their heads, and entering with songs and transports into the Kingdom of Christ.—*Rev. Dr. Parker.*

## FREEDOM FROM SOUL-MURDER.

Fathers and mothers ! you are the ministers of God to your children. Your flock is, indeed, less numerous than that of the public preacher of the Gospel ; but you have, on that very account, a more perfect supervision over them. Your obligations do not respect so large a number ; but you are under a weightier responsibility in regard to each one of your little flock than any minister can be in respect to each one of his more numerous charge. The principles that bind you to faithfulness are the same as those that impose obligations upon the pastor. You may become guilty of soul-murder. Nor will the fact that you are not a professor of religion diminish in the least the guilt of your unnatural neglect of the spiritual well-being of your offspring. Their souls are of unspeakable worth. If you discharge your duty in teaching them, and in praying for the illuminations of the Divine Spirit ; if you endeavor, with pious solicitude, to win them to their Saviour, you may hope to be, under God, the instrument of their salvation. If you neglect them, they may be lost forever, and you may be unable to stand up and shake your raiment, and say, with Paul, " I am pure from the blood of all men," or even to say, " I am pure from the blood of my own dear children."

The obligation to secure the well-being of persons bears some proportion to the degree of probability with which success may be expected. If the minister of the Gospel knew certainly that his efforts would be of no avail, then he could not be guilty of soul-murder ; because it could not be said that any sinner ever perished as a consequence of his want of fidelity. But the probabilities are great that he shall succeed in gaining some, if he is faithful and persevering in his efforts. Parents enjoy greater prospects of success. If they are faithful, earnest, and persevering in their endeavors, they are almost sure of ultimate success. Yet neither the devout and faithful minister nor the pious parent can be absolutely certain that they shall have success in a given case. It may be that they shall be compelled, at last, to look on the object of their solicitude, and say, " Your blood be upon your own head : I am clean." But there can be no such uncertainty in respect to *your own case*. The parent has a more complete supervision over his child than the pastor has over an individual of his public charge. If the parent fail, therefore, through his own unfaithfulness, it is a more awful delinquency. He has less exposure to failure ; he has better advantages, and better prospects of success. But you have a still more complete supervision over yourself than the parent has over his child ; you have greater probability of success not



merely; you are certain of it, if you will do your best to insure it. You cannot, under any possible circumstances, stand up in your place among the lost, and shake your raiment, and say, "I am clean from my own blood." On the contrary, if you perish, though others may have contracted guilt, your blood will be pre-eminently on your own head.

The souls of men cannot perish without involving somebody in the guilt of soul-murder. The body may die by the operations of natural law. Its dissolution may be only a blessing—the taking down of a comparatively incommodious and even vile tabernacle, that the indwelling spirit may go to reside in heavenly mansions; but the *soul* cannot die but by an unnatural death; it can perish only by murder and suicide. Take heed that its blood stain not your garments. Apply to Christ for cleansing, and see to it, that, through his atoning blood, you may be prepared to walk with him in white.—*Rev. Dr. Parker.*

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